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Contact: Aurelio Rojas 213-280-6579
James Bolden 213-200-5314

RIDLEY-THOMAS WELCOMES SUPPORT OF MAYOR VILLARAIGOSA AND CITY CONTROLLER IN CALL FOR AUDIT OF MTA LEGAL COSTS

LOS ANGELES – Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who has called for a comprehensive audit of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's spiraling legal costs, today welcomed the support of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and City Controller Wendy Greuel.

On Thursday, the MTA Board of Directors is scheduled to consider a motion requesting that the agency's Inspector General audit the agency's legal costs, including \$30 million spent on one lawsuit against a contractor.

Last week, during a meeting of the MTA's Audit Committee, Mayor Villaraigosa agreed to join Supervisor Ridley-Thomas in co-authoring the audit. A day later, Controller Greuel sent a letter in support of the audit to the two authors and MTA Chairman Ara Najarian.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said that with a projected \$250 million budget deficit, the MTA can "ill afford to lose track of litigation costs."

"The audit is not intended to focus on any particular case, but rather at the process that has allowed several legal bills to swell past \$10 million, just for MTA's share of the costs," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

In her letter, Controller Greuel said “these difficult economic times” call for even greater “transparency and accountability in how the public’s funds are spent.”

“I strongly support your efforts to request the Inspector General to do a comprehensive review and audit of MTA litigation cost management, including claims and litigation that have occurred over the last five years,” she wrote.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas and Mayor Villaraigosa are requesting an inventory of all claims and litigation cases within the past five years, including payouts, outside counsel costs, litigation expenses, County Counsel costs, and the type, nature and category of the claims.

Their motion also calls for an evaluation of the MTA’s current policies, procedures, and practices; case management practices and supervision; risks management; and communication with MTA Board members.

The audit findings would be presented to the MTA Board no later than June.

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